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It does not appear from the experience of several years, that the clock would vary more than 12 seconds per diem, with the extreme changes of winter and summer, and wet and dry in our climate; when a single rod of iron would produce a change of 22 seconds per diem, and one of brass 34. Hence a conclusion may be drawn, that wood (though far from being perfect) is preferable to a single rod, either of iron, or of brass.

I am, with great esteem,

your sincere friend,

and humble servant,

ANDREW ELLICOTT.

No. XIV.

Notices of the Natural History of the northerly parts of Louisiana, in a letter from Dr. John Watkins to Dr. Barton.

Read Jan. 1st, 1803.

St. Louis, Illinois. Octobr. 20th, 1802.
Supposed latitude between 39° and 40°.

DEAR SIR,

In the note which you gave me some time ago, relative to some of the animals, larger trees and shrubs, that are to be found on the west side of the Mississippi; you requested me, that as the questions were made without much regard to order, to trouble myself as little as possible about the arrangement of my answers. I shall therefore proceed, in the spirit of that request, and in the plainest manner, without regard to any particular arrangement, mention such of those animals, trees, and shrubs, as are here to be met with; and state to you as nearly as I can the part of the country where they most abound.

The red fox (*canis vulpes*) is not known in this part of the country, or any where on this side the Mississippi, immediately

in our latitude. North of 44 degrees however, and at the distance of seven or eight hundred miles west of the Mississippi, this animal is very common. The beaver (*castor fiber*) is very common here, and has been observed in great numbers as far west as the whites have penetrated; and agreeably to the accounts of the savages, this animal is found in great abundance in the mountains that divide the waters of the southern from those of the Atlantic ocean.

The buffaloe (*bos americanus*) is common in all this country, and is found in great abundance as far west as the country has been penetrated. During the winter they change their range, and ramble to a great distance in the south, returning again in the spring to their more northern residence. In these rambles they go together in immense droves, and the savages, by watching them in proper passages, destroy great numbers with little trouble and expense.

The elk (*cervus** *wapiti*), the common deer (*cervus virginianus*), the raccoon (*ursus lotor*), the panther (*felis concolor*), the ground hog (*arctomys monax*), the grey fox (*canis virginianus*), the mink †, the flying squirrel (*sciurus volucella*), the ground squirrel (*sciurus striatus*), the grey squirrel (*sciurus cinereus*), and the black squirrel (*sciurus niger*), are all found in this country, and are common for many hundred miles to the west.

The opossum (*didelphis opossum*) is common here; and agreeably to the information of Mr. Choteau, a sensible well-informed man, this animal is to be met with as far west as three hundred and fifty leagues from hence, that is, following the course of the Missouri, which is west one quarter of a degree to the north; and that after passing a large river, called *la Riviere qui coule*, the opossum disappears, and the Porcupine (*hystrix dorsata*), which is not to be seen about here, becomes common.

In mounting the Missouri, after passing the river *qui coule*, that is 350 leagues west of the Mississippi, the country assumes a different aspect. The river washes for several hundred miles a barren ungrateful soil, destitute of timber. Nothing is to be

* Unknown to Linnæus. I call it C. Wapiti. B. S. B. † *Mustela Winingus mibi*. B. S. B.

seen but extensive plains of what is called natural meadow, and here and there, upon the borders of the rivers and creeks, a few cotton wood (*populus deltoide*), hickory (*juglans*), and shrub oak (*quercus*). Here it is that the white bear (*ursus arctos*?) is found; to give you a just description of this animal would require more knowledge of natural history than I possess. I shall therefore only repeat to you, in general, what the most intelligent and best informed traders and hunters have informed me upon this subject. The white bear, as it is here called, is found of all colours from a brown to almost a perfect white; and, to use the hunters expression, differs as much in its colour as the different varieties of dogs. It is much taller and longer than the common bear; the belly is more lank, and the abdomen drawn up like that of a horse kept for the course. It runs much swifter, and its head and claws are much larger, and longer in proportion than the common bear. It feeds principally upon animal food, and is considered by the savages as their most dangerous enemy. It attacks universally; kills, and devours human flesh. It is not in the above mentioned country alone that this animal is found; it is common much farther to the north and west, and occupies a wide and extensive range, upon all the waters that form the sources of the Missouri.

I can verify, in part, the truth of the above account of the white bear, particularly as to its size and external appearance. My friend the Lieutenant Governor of the upper Louisiana and commandant of Saint Louis, Mr. Dehault Delassus, has now in his possession one of these bears of about six months old. Its colour is that of a pale orange approaching to white, with a streak of dark brown along the back, and on the outside of the thighs. It is taller and longer than common bears of its age, notwithstanding the manner in which it has been raised, and its head and claws are much larger. It has been constantly fed upon boiled indian corn, and pains have been taken to render it as docile and good natured as possible. It has not as yet shewn any symptoms of ferocity, but suffers its keeper to beat and handle it as he pleases. In general it exhibits, in its manners, nearly the same character with that of the common bear. This cub, with another of a different family and

colour, was caught, when very young, by the Chayenne Indians and presented to the Governor through some of their traders. These Indians inhabit the country upon the head waters of one of the principal branches of the Missouri, called *la Fourche*, and their residence cannot be less than 450, or 500 leagues west of the Mississippi. Mr. Delassus made a present not long since of one of these cubs, the smallest and darkest coloured, to my friend Mr. Wm. Harrison Governor of the Indiana territory, who informed me that he intended to present it to the President of the Philosophical Society of Philadelphia. There you will no doubt have an opportunity of seeing it, and will be prepared to form a much more correct opinion, as to its proper place among the different tribes of bears, than can possibly be done from the imperfect account given by hunters.

The buck eye (*Æsculus flava*), the pacan tree (*juglans pecan*), black walnut (*juglans nigra*), our common species of hickory, the sugar maple (*acer saccharum*), the persimmon (*diospyros virginiana*), and the coffee tree (*guilandina dioica*), as it is called in Kentucky, are all common in this country, and are to be found as far west as 350 leagues from hence; that is until you arrive at *la Riviere qui coule*. The beech (*fagus ferruginea*), the chinquapin (*fagus pumila*), the chesnut (*fagus castanea*?) and the poplar with a tulip flower (*liriodendron tulipifera*), are none of them to be found in this part of the country or to the west of this, agreeably to the information of the best-informed traders and hunters. The poplar with a tulip flower however is found in abundance about one hundred miles to the south of this, and on the west side of the Mississippi.

JOHN WATKINS.